

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3089
ANSWERED ON:13.08.2003
ASBESTOS MINING
PRAKASH V. PATIL

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether W.H.O. Agency on cancer Research has declared Asbestos mining as cancer creating hazards;
- (b) whether the Institute of Occupational Health at Ahmedabad has stated that the cause of untimely deaths of the Asbestos miner is Asbestos;
- (c) whether the Supreme Court has issued some guidelines in this regard;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the action taken or contemplated by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SMT. SUSHMA SWARAJ)

(a)to(e): The information received from the World Health Organisation (WHO) indicates that the persons engage in asbestos mining are at risk of having cancer. While the National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH), Ahmedabad has not done any specific study on the mortality rate of miners, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is of the view that long term exposure to any type of asbestos can lead to development of asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma.

The Supreme Court in a Judgement on Asbestosis in response to the Writ Petition filed by Consumer Education and Research Centre & others have inter-alia stated:-

- (i) Health record of every worker to be maintained up to 40 years from beginning of employment or 15 days after retirement/cessation whichever is later
- (ii) Membrane filter test to be adopted by industries to detect asbestos fibre.
- (iii) All the factories were directed to compulsorily insure health coverage to every worker.
- (iv) Union and State Governments were directed to review the standards of permissible exposure limit value of fibres after every 10 years and also when International Labour Organisation (ILO) gives directions
- (v) Union and State Governments were directed to consider inclusion of small-scale factories also to protect health hazards of the workers.

Various standards have been prescribed by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to ensure safety in handling & use of asbestos and asbestos products. In addition there are provisions under the Factories (Amendment) Act 1987, Mines Act 1952 and Environment Protection Act 1986 to reduce/control the hazards produced due to asbestos exposure.